

room, where there was a large double window to the south, and there seemed to be a marked improvement after each exposure to the warm, invigorating rays.

With a prospect of health and usefulness for my patient, it was with true thanksgiving in my own heart that I bade good-by to an unbroken family circle, and their gratitude fully repaid me for the many weary hours I had spent over my patient's bed, when not an encouraging symptom could be found.

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### THE SOOTHING EFFECT OF THE "LONG NEUTRAL BATH" ON AN IRRITABLE CHILD \*

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It is a theory sufficiently proved by experience that irritability and unreasonableness in a child are caused by its being tired and needing rest. Often, but not always, such a condition can be met and the child's temper controlled and spirits restored by compulsory rest. The late afternoon is a trying time for a child, especially one who has just outgrown the afternoon nap. This is also an impracticable time of day for a child to lie down. It may be sleepy, but instinctively resists sleep by every method its ingenuity can devise. In summer the room is warm, and the child, if forced to lie down, tosses and tumbles, and when it succumbs and is quiet, it is from sheer exhaustion. At the evening meal the child does not relish his food, and appears weary and uncomfortable until bedtime.

After working on this theory of rest cure for some time with varying results, it occurred to me that in case of a patient who seemed to feel as the child acted, a "long neutral bath" had always given relief.

As an experiment such a bath was given a child who was in a very resistive frame of mind. When placed in the water his spirits rose immediately, he called for his rubber balls and his boats, and was soon his old happy self, sailing the ocean. At the end of a half-hour he was full of play, and came to dinner with a smiling face and good appetite. At bed-time he dropped off into a quiet sleep.

The next time that the child showed signs of being abnormally unreasonable, and would respond to no diversion, he was hurried off to the bath before the nerve storm had reached its full force. Visions of

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a long swim in his bathing suit, with his balls and boats and water wings, looked very attractive to him. His little brother pleaded to have on his bathing suit and join in the bath, and they were soon two jolly little sailors.

The bath thermometer was one of their boats, and they took great pride in helping keep the water the right temperature. Not long after, a young mother asked me what to do for her little Marjorie, when she was cross. My original theory of rest cure brought the response, "Put her to bed?" "She will not stay there." Then it was proposed to lock the door, to which she answered, "She kicked out one of the panels." The long soothing bath seemed applicable to the case, and advice was given to try it. The mother told me the results were most happy.

Another patient exclaimed that such a bath was "heavenly," and she would never feel so nervous again, for she would know now just what to do to prevent it.

In this short article we can only state a few facts, and cannot go into the scientific consideration of what is known in the medical world as the "neutral bath."

The skin is full of little terminal nerves, all connected with main nerves like a system of telegraph wires. In case of undue excitement, the circulation is increased and the activity of every nerve seems to be reinforced a hundred-fold. In the "long neutral bath" we have a potent remedy which is immediate, direct, and always soothing in its effect, without any damaging influences. This result is obtained through surrounding and protecting these myriads of little over-sensitive nerves by immersing the body in water near its own temperature, and thus almost entirely shutting away from it a variety of aggravating influences.

The bath restores the nerve tone by decreasing the heart's action and checking the loss of energy. In about fifteen minutes in a bath at this temperature, perspiration is suspended, so that water accumulates in the tissues about the little nerve endings. In this way the nerves of the skin become water-soaked, as it were, and the sedative effect is carried back to the nerve centres, producing a general soothing influence. Muscular irritability is quieted, and permanent good is done the whole system.

An anæmic or bloodless skin is more sensitive than a healthy skin, and a fretful, delicate child should be benefitted by frequent treatment of this character. To secure the desired results, the "neutral bath" must be prolonged at least twenty to forty minutes, the temperature of the water accurately sustained between 92 and 97 degrees F., and the child kept in the house for an hour afterward.